

EXHIBIT O-8

https://www.roanoke.com/news/politics/general_assembly/legislation-inspired-by-opioid-crisis-headed-to-governor-s-desk/article_c17c0cc7-177c-5922-99e6-fe66df4cddfe.html

Legislation inspired by opioid crisis headed to governor's desk

By Carmen Forman carmen.forman@roanoke.com 981-3334 Feb 26, 2018

RICHMOND — Carolyn Weems' daughter was a victim of the opioid crisis.

Caitlyn Weems died after a prolonged struggle with prescription pain pills and later, heroin.

While mourning the death of her 21-year-old daughter, Carolyn Weems stepped into action to educate students about the dangers of prescription pain medication. Carolyn Weems, a Virginia Beach School Board member, helped craft opioid addiction education for the 69,000-student school district.

Now, that curriculum is poised to go statewide per legislation introduced by Del. Charniele Herring, D-Alexandria. The push for increased opioid education is one of the numerous legislative initiatives to combat the opioid crisis facing the commonwealth.

Long-term back pain followed by a severe soccer injury left Caitlyn Weems reliant on prescription pain pills. That is until she tried something illicit: heroin.

She died four months later.

"It has to start with conversation and talking about it and making sure everybody knows the consequences of overprescribed medication," Carolyn Weems said. "It doesn't have a happy ending."

This is the second year Virginia Beach students in first through 10th grades have received opioid-related education in their physical education classes.

In the early years, kids learn the basics like what prescription pill bottles look like and are told not to eat the pills, even if they look like candy, Weems said. In later years, students learn the psychology behind addiction and delve into the science behind the opioid crisis, Weems said.

Herring wants more students to learn the dangers of prescription pain medications.

"I thought, 'what a great idea to make sure that we're attacking the crisis at the front end so that students are learning that yes, you follow doctor's instructions, but you need to ask questions,'" Herring said. Her legislation has passed both chambers of the General Assembly.

State lawmakers have introduced other initiatives to curb opioid abuse. State Health Commissioner Marissa Levine declared the opioid crisis a public health emergency in 2016 — a reaction to the state's rapidly growing number of overdose deaths.

Del. Todd Pillion, R-Washington, and Sen. Siobhan Dunnivant, R-Henrico, proposed a legislative fix to require surgeons to check the Prescription Monitoring Program before prescribing more than seven days of opioids. Experts have learned that five to seven days on opioids is the window of time in which a patient typically becomes addicted, Pillion said.

Proposed legislation would also build on previous initiatives to better identify and treat substance-exposed infants by directing the Department of Health to take the lead in formulating a plan to help the vulnerable population.

As the number of opioid overdoses continues to rise, so does the rate of babies exposed to dangerous drugs in utero.

"If you don't care about people who are dealing with substance abuse disorders and you have no compassion for them, the people that you have to have compassion for are those children that are born into a world that they don't deserve," said Pillion, a pediatric dentist.

Another bill would require naloxone — an overdose antidote — and other drugs that are considered at low risk for abuse but still require prescriptions to be reported in the Prescription Monitoring Program.

Adding naloxone to the monitoring program will let prescribers see if patients already have a prescription for the quick-acting overdose reversal treatment, Pillion said. If a physician has prescribed opioids and naloxone, but the patient fills the opioid prescription, but not the

naloxone prescription, that doctor may rethink what he's prescribing, Pillion said.

Other legislation would allow Virginia localities to establish overdose review teams to better understand trends in local overdose deaths and recommend solutions to state agencies.

The set of bills will head to Gov. Ralph Northam's desk after lawmakers make final tweaks to some of the legislation.

Meanwhile, the number of opioids physicians are prescribing is falling, but the number of opioid-related overdoses continues to rise. Pain reliever doses dropped by 45 percent last year, according to the Prescription Monitoring System that tracks prescriptions filled in the state.

Pillion attributes the drop to a combination of actions taken by Virginia's legislature and the Board of Medicine last year. The groups implemented new regulations for doctors to limit opioid prescriptions and required physicians to check patients' prescription history in the Prescription Monitoring Program. The Board of Medicine also increased opioid education for prescribers.

"Despite all this progress, there's of course still a lot of work to do," he said. "We still see families and communities that are ravaged across the commonwealth."

Painkiller prescriptions decline but overdose deaths continue to rise

Fatal opioid overdoses double in Roanoke Valley

Buprenorphine overdose deaths

Buprenorphine, a medication used to treat opioid addiction, can be lethal when combined with other drugs. Below are deaths by state health district, counted from Jan. 1 2016 to June 30, 2017.



SOURCE: Virginia Department of Health

The Roanoke Times

Some Virginia overdose deaths attributed to medication used to control addiction



Roanoke woman killed in Las Vegas a 'beautiful person who suffered from a horrific disease'

Virginia researchers seek rapid way to treat opioid addiction